

## **Leisah Woldoff**

### [Jewish News](#)

Iran's nuclear threat to Israel was the overwhelming focus of this year's AIPAC breakfast, held Dec. 13 at the Arizona Biltmore Resort & Spa in Phoenix.

Several Arizona politicians who spoke addressed the issue, as did keynote speaker Rabbi Daniel Gordis, who told the 1,200 guests that they were "the latest on the front lines" to fight against forces seeking to undermine the state of Israel.

More than 60 local, state and federal elected officials attended Sunday's American Israel Public Affairs Committee event. Twenty synagogues and Jewish organizations were represented, and the gathering also included more than 100 high school and college students.

Politicians who spoke included U.S. Reps. Trent Franks (R-2nd District), Gabrielle Giffords (D-8th District), Harry Mitchell (D-5th District) and Ann Kirkpatrick (D-1st District), as well as Gov. Jan Brewer.

Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) and Sen. Jon Kyl (R-Ariz.) were originally on the program but remained in Washington, D.C., to address national health-care issues; McCain spoke via cell phone, with his photo displayed on two large screens.

During her brief remarks, Giffords noted that it is unusual to see Democrats and Republicans sitting in the same room in agreement - in this case, in support of Israel.

The diversity of the attendees "is incredible," said Michael Zent, president and CEO of Jewish Family & Children's Service, after the event.

"It's great to have (the elected officials) here to be able to communicate to them the necessity of their support," said Bennett Brown of Scottsdale, who was attending his first AIPAC breakfast.

Gordis, senior vice president of the Shalem Center, a Jerusalem-based research and educational institute, and author of "Saving Israel: How the Jewish People Can Win a War That May Never End," noted that Israel's enemies have used many means to attempt to destroy the Jewish state. Besides attacks on Israel by a standing Arab army - which hasn't been done since 1973 - Israel's enemies have used economic boycotts and terrorism.

The current strategy is to delegitimize Israel in the eyes of the international community, Gordis said, and to get the rest of the world to believe that Israel shouldn't exist. He cited the slogan "Zionism is racism" and the comparison of Israel's treatment of Palestinians to apartheid in South Africa.

This also played out in the press during last year's Operation Cast Lead in the Gaza Strip, he said. The world didn't care about what was happening in Sderot, a town that was under daily rocket fire from the Gaza Strip for eight years. However, several hours after the conflict started,

"the world goes ballistic," he said, giving the example of Palestinian terrorists hiding bombs in mosques and schoolyards, hoping that Israeli forces would bomb those sites to make the Jewish state look bad in the eyes of the world community.

"The keynote speaker delivered one of the most moving speeches on the subject I have heard," Anthony Krueger of Scottsdale wrote in an e-mail to Jewish News. "He effectively drew from real-life examples to demonstrate how the anti-Israel movement harnesses disinformation tactics in order to delegitimize the existence of Israel. ... He tied the importance of the actions of the AIPAC membership to effective countermeasures."

The Dec. 13 event came two days before the House was scheduled to vote on the Iran Refined Petroleum Sanctions Act (IRPSA). ( [See related story.](#) )

Many speakers commented on the breakfast being held during Hanukkah.

In his remarks, Israel Consul General Jacob Dayan recalled the two themes of Hanukkah: miracles and fighting "for what we believe in." In 62 years, Israel has experienced seven wars, 30,000 terrorist attacks and had 7,000 missiles fired at it, and still Israel survives, he noted.

"Even after those challenges, today Israel has a thriving and diverse economy, broad cultural appeal, a flourishing, free and open society, unprecedented achievements in areas of high-tech and clean green technology," he said. "This is nothing short of a miracle."

Alan Roga, a member of the event committee, encouraged guests "To Do One Thing" whether it be attending the 2010 AIPAC Policy Conference March 21-23 in Washington, D.C., or participating in an AIPAC summer caucus with a member of Congress. "Don't lose this great enthusiasm when you leave the room today," he said. "Find your one thing to make a difference."

AIPAC student activists Frima Enghelberg, originally from Venezuela, and Andrea Valenzuela, originally from Peru, described their journey to AIPAC. Enghelberg became involved with the AIPAC Early Engagement program in Miami, when she was a high school senior, after a classmate was killed in a suicide bombing at a Tel Aviv falafel stand. She now works on expanding the political pro-Israel movement at Florida International University, where she is a senior. Valenzuela, also a senior at FIU, was inspired by her church's pro-Israel teachings to be politically active to help Israel. She described her visit to Israel on an AIPAC Campus Allies Mission with 39 other young leaders and her plans to join the U.S. Army.

Krueger said he was inspired by the students' speeches, as well as by McCain's. "I was also touched by all the state elected officials (Republican and Democrat) who showed unwavering support," he wrote in an e-mail. "It seems, in general, Arizonans support Israel."